

**James Madison to James Monroe, July, 1823.
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TO JAMES MONROE. CHIC. HIST. SOC. MSS.

July—1823

Dr. Sir, —I am giving you more trouble & of a more disagreeable sort than I cd. wish, but an enquiry into the case of Jackson's appt. in May 1814 involves circumstances not to be fully elucidated without a resort which you have kindly permitted.¹

¹ On February 5, 1824, Madison wrote to Monroe again saying he wished information obtained from Jackson to show what was the form and date of the appointment of Major General accepted by him in his letter of June 20, 1814, to the Secretary of War, and when the appointment was to take effect. The reason for his questions is explained in his statement prepared in 1824 (but never printed) entitled; "Review of a statement attributed to Genl. John Armstrong, with an appendix of illustrative documents." The review said that in the *Literary and Scientific Repository*, October, 1821, a statement appeared stating that early in May, 1814, Armstrong had proposed that Jackson be appointed a Brigadier with the brevet rank of Major General, until a vacancy should permit his appointment as Major General, and that Madison had approved the arrangement. A communication was, accordingly, made to Jackson; but when Harrison's resignation was received and reported to Madison he was undecided. Armstrong, however, acted on the President's first approval and sent a commission to Jackson. The letters gathered by Madison showed: that on May 14, 1814, Armstrong had proposed that Jackson be made a Brigadier with the brevet of

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Major General; that the President ordered Armstrong on May 17 to send a commission for that rank; that on May 20 Armstrong reported Harrison's resignation without any suggestion concerning Jackson; that on May 24 the President wrote Armstrong that Harrison's resignation opened the way for a Major General's commission for Jackson, but he would suspend a final decision. In the meantime he returned the commission of Brevet Major General because he had not received the preliminary one of Brigadier. On May 23 Armstrong wrote to Jackson that commissions would be prepared appointing him Brigadier and Brevet Major General. On June 8 Jackson replied accepting this appointment. On May 28 Armstrong informed Jackson of his appointment as Major General to succeed Harrison. It was evident, according to Madison, that Armstrong was endeavoring to convey the false impression that he, and not Madison, really made the appointment. Madison's statement proceeds:

“Should it be asked why the individual in question [Armstrong] was placed, and, after such developments in his career, continued, at the head of the War Department, the answer will readily occur to those best acquainted with the circumstances of the period. Others may be referred for an explanation to the difficulty which had been felt in its fullest pressure, of obtaining services which would have been preferred; several eminent citizens to whom the station had been offered having successively declined it. It was not unknown at the time that objections existed to the person finally appointed, as appeared when his nomination went to the Senate, where it received the reluctant sanction of a scanty majority. Nor was the President unaware or unwarned of the temper and turn of mind ascribed to him, which might be uncongenial with the official relations in which he was to stand. But these considerations were sacrificed to recommendations from esteemed friends, a belief that he possessed, with known talents, a degree of military information which might be useful, and a hope that a proper mixture of conciliating confidence and interposing controul, would render objectionable peculiarities less in practice than in prospect. And as far as disappointments were experienced, it was thought better, to bear with them, than to incur, anew, the difficulty of finding a successor, with the inconveniences of an interval and a

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forced change in the head of the department of War, in the midst of war. This view of the subject continued to prevail, till the departure of the Secretary took place.”— *Mad MSS.*

The Secy. of War proposed on the 14th May in my absence from Washington to make him a Brigr. with a brevet of Majr. Genl. till Hampton's vacancy cd. be filled by the Senate. I answered on the 17th send me the Comn.. On the 20th He mentioned *nakedly* among other things that Harrison had resigned and enclosed one Comn. witht. alluding to any enclosure. My answr. on the 24 shews that I understood it to be for the brevet, as it intimated the omission of the preliminary one of Brigr.. The Secy was silent & no other Comission sent.

What then was the identical Comn. of Majr. Genl. sent to J—n by the Sey on the 28th of May?

Was it the Comn. enclosed to me on the 20 and understood to be for the Brevet: and if so was it a blank one or filled up with the Brevet appt. if the former it was used for a purpose contrary to the known intention of the Pt.: if the latter there must have been an erasure wch. cd. only be ascertained by the Comn. itself in the hands of J—n.

Cd. it have been a blank Comn signed & left in the Dept for ordinary contingencies & inferior grades? This is rendered the more improbable by the apparent necessity of my calling for Com. to be signed—and by the one actually enclosed to me the 20th. If any lights can be properly obtained on this point I sd. be glad of them. The point itself is more than of mere curiosity.

When do you make your next visit to Albemarle?